



Great music, musicians, and memorable performances mark the first Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival

The Dutch Caribbean is the birthplace and home of many internationally renowned jazz musicians, and this weekend they occupied three venues within Aruba's Cas di Cultura for the first Caribbean Sea Jazz Festival. The festival, sponsored by Heineken, and a dream of guitarist Erik Eman, attracted visitors from as far as California that came to hear a number of legendary jazz musicians in two intensive evenings of improvisational music. Famous performers such as Michel Camilo of the Dominican Republic and winner of several Grammy, Latin Grammy, and Emmy awards, plus Praful of Holland made it a truly international festival of the highest caliber.

Other featured artists included internationally known Randal Corson, Isoco, Ronchi Matthews, and Jean-Jacques Rojer of Curacao, and Aruban artists Delbert Bernabela, Robert JeanD'or, Johnny Scharbaay, Ivan Jansen, Ricardo Garcia, Antonio Bello, and young Sherghio Jansen. Performing Aruban groups were Jemm, Sonic Lab, and Soul Cowboy, usually with Hildward Croes on keyboards and Erik Eman on guitar.

Ronchi Matthews reminisced about his early days as a student and musician, along with a number of the other visiting artists, which made the festival "almost a school reunion." "At the beginning of my career, I was, like many musicians, without funds, and I used to borrow Hildward's keyboard to perform when I got a gig, and then have to run and return it to him afterwards so he could perform." For Ronchi, Hildward, Ivan, Johnny and many of the others, the festival was a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the performances of their peers, and a treat for audiences to relax on the lawn, "chill" in the auditorium, or mellow and nibble at the "Bacardi Open-air Lounge" while listening to some of the best improv on earth!